

# **A Brief Talk on Humanity and Civilization**

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## **Foreword**

“War begins in the minds of men”, yet the minds of men begin in civilization.

The history of the development of mankind and brutal wars seem to be intertwined, namely, civilization is in a sense the result of war!

War was engaged by a nation for the purpose of taking the land from other ethnic groups to expand its own territory; the expansion of its territory was aimed at the natural resources underneath, and this led to the mix of politics and economy. With the political means that determined the economy, the economic power in turn drove the political ambition of expansion and aggression, and so politics became twinned with the economy. The twins of this political and economic integration, under the power of the ruler and driven by the increasing desire for money, would be the cause of human wars and predation.

The law of the jungle of the weak and powerful is the "nature" of everything between the heavens and the earth and of the reincarnation of the natural rules which mutually reinforces and neutralizes each other in an endless succession. As the soul of all beings, mankind, owing to this natural recuperation and multiplication, develops its civilization, thinking and reflection, as well as the lingering barbaric genes and nature. Therefore, whenever the civilized gene cannot "suppress" the "barbaric" gene, the actions of human beings will be under the mercy of the barbaric and primitive nature! Hence, any desire to stop this kind of barbaric gene latent in the human body and the spirit will have to be fulfilled only through improving the civilized elements in the human body and "suppressing" the barbaric gene wanting to "rebel" at every opportunity. Perhaps the civilized dialogue between people is another solution to "suppressing" and the gradually elimination of this barbaric gene, thereby undertaking the engineering of human spirit to "...build in the minds of men a defense of peace"!

## **I. The Origin of the Civilization of Mankind**

The origin of the human race, as it is said in the Bible, lies in the creation of God, whereas in Darwin's theory it originates from the evolution of the ape, which has been a controversial and ongoing debate between religion and science.

However, the discovery of primitive African human skeletons, the successive excavation of the skulls of Chinese Lantian Man, Peking Man, and Banpo Man by archaeologists are the strong evidence that the presence of the human being on the earth has been more than three million years!

Mankind has, from the primitive state to the Paleolithic Mesolithic and Neolithic Ages, slowly gone through a long history without the drive of civilization. Life and dietary habit changed from eating raw meat to drilling wood to make fire. A large number of pictograms were discovered a few years ago on the rocks in the Juci mountain of Henan province in China which were estimated by the archaeologists to date back to the Neolithic Age some eight thousand years ago.

At around 4000 BC, men in the Eastern world progressed to the primary civilized stage with farming, fishing and hunting, silk weaving, replacing trekking with boats and carriages, living in caves and carving totemic signs on rocks to express emotions and record messages.

### **The Beginning of the Western Civilization**

It is believed that as early as 5000 BC, the Sumerian tribe of the Mesopotamia within the Tigris–Euphrates river system first entered a civilized society. They invented the cuneiform, creating a bright ancient civilization. Cities were built in the Euphrates and Tigris regions, people engaged in agriculture, livestock farming and handicrafts, invented the lunar calendar, mathematics, bronze ware, wheels, theology and astronomy, and other cultural heritage.

Our universe, which carries two hundred billion planets, is a vast and boundless black hole, and is one of the components of the Milky Way; Earth is the sole planet in the solar system where life exists, and during the six billion light years, life on the earth has gone through cycles of evolution, enriching the diversity and coexistence of different species on the planet. From the study of archaeologists and anthropologists, ever since the advent

of the most primitive "ape man", the human race has lived on Earth for four million years.

It is said that the human race appeared overnight in Africa, Asia and Western Europe and other regions, and that human civilization also emerged on the earth in an instant!

It took more than 10,000 years from the first ape man to evolve into civilization: from the Yellow River valley, the Yangtze River basin, and the Central Plains region in China, cultural relics have been found at Yangshao, Longtian, Peiligang, Erlitou and Liangzhu, which show that the Chinese civilization started as early as about 10,000 years ago.

The ancient Indus River basin civilization also emerged about 4,000 BC in the Indus River and the Ganges River areas. In the Western world, the ancient Egyptian civilization, the ancient Roman dynasty, the ancient Greek civilization and the ancient Babylonian civilization also emerged about 4,000 – 3,500 BC. It can be seen therefore that the coming of the human race on the earth and the birth of human civilization are almost a global manifestation.

After years of battling against weather and of the destruction of warfare, the surviving civilizations, after centuries of rise and decline, can be divided into:

European and American culture circle - the traditional European civilization and Christian civilization, consisting of Protestantism and Roman Catholicism;

East Asian Culture Circle - represented by the Chinese Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism;

Central Asian culture circle - represented by Islam, and the Middle East region;

Central and Eastern Europe, Slavic Culture Circle - formed by Christian Orthodox and Russia.

The above-mentioned major cultural circles have, in general terms, reflected the development process of the human civilization and demonstrated the diversification of the humanities, and finally shaped their own integrated diversity, thereby presenting us with bright and shining civilizations of the human history.

## **II. The Evolution of Human Social System**

The ancient Western civilization, from the two rivers basin to the Nile civilization, reflects the rise and fall of the Sumerians and ancient Egypt. The Sumerians established a slave system in a small state consisting of townships more than six thousand years ago and started warfare with neighbouring states and expanded its territory. Then during the reign of the Amorites, the powerful old Babylon was built, followed by the Neo-Babylonian Empire amid wars and annexations. But the Babylonian Empire was eventually eliminated by the Persian army in 539 BC after more than three thousand years of struggle and change of dynasties.

The ancient Egyptian civilization in the same period of time also experienced similar rise and fall like the Babylonian Empire; it waged wars and annexed vast territories from neighbouring states. Although it reached the pinnacle of its power in ancient times, it was inevitably destroyed by the Persian Empire in 525 BC! Since then, the ancient Babylonia and Egypt have been ruled by the Greek and then by the Roman Empires.

It just happened that the ancient Eastern civilization emerged at the same period. During the times of the Three Sovereigns and Five Emperors, the Yan Emperor and Yellow Emperor joined forces and defeated Chi You to become the cultural ancestors of the Chinese people, who introduced farming, fishing and hunting, silk weaving, replaced trekking with boats and carriages, and used herbs to treat illness, gradually moving out of the primitive era.

China's primitive society went through the Paleolithic, Mesolithic and Neolithic Ages, covering more than 600,000 years, while it has been more than six thousand years since the time of the Emperors Yan, Yellow, Yao, Shun, and Yu the Great.

Yu the Great (Da Yu), who introduced flood control in ancient times, established the first dynasty in China – the Xia Dynasty, marking the entry into the slave society. The dynasties of Xia, Shang and Zhou (the Eastern and Western Zhou periods) spanned over about three thousand years, and entered another historical phase in 225 BC.

China entered the Spring and Autumn Period and the Warring States Period, where seven states competed for supremacy, until the year 221 BC when Qin Shihuang (the First Emperor of Qin) unified the country. However, the unification of the Central Plains by Qin Shihuang only lasted 15 years, and in 206 BC the Qin Dynasty was overthrown by Liu Bang, Emperor Gaozu of Han. The rule in the Western Han and the Eastern Han lasted 409 years, and was ultimately terminated by the Three Kingdoms (Wei, Shu, Wu). Since then, China entered the feudal system in the period of Wei, Jin, Southern and Northern Dynasties, followed by the rise and fall of the Sui,

Tang, Song, Yuan, Ming, Qing dynasties for over two thousand years, until the Xinhai Revolution in 1911, when the feudal system was abolished and a republic was ushered in China.

In the West, since the Greek and Roman Empires, Europe has witnessed 2,500 years of constant warfare including the "Battle of Marathon", the "First Naval Warfare in the Human History", the "Peloponnesian War", the "Battle of the Granicus", the "Spartak Uprising", the "Migration of the Germanic Tribes", the "Byzantine–Sassanid Wars", the "Conquest of the Eastern Roman Empire", the "Decline of the Persian Empire", "Byzantine Empire under the Macedonian Dynasty", the "Coming of the Roman Empire", "Robert on Crusade", the "Crusades", the "Anglo-French War", the "Occupation of Jerusalem by Egypt", "Wars of the Roses", the "Italian Wars", the "American Revolutionary War", "Storming of Bastille", the "Haitian Revolution", the "Second American War of Independence", the "Battle of Waterloo" before and after the medieval Renaissance.

During the Industrial Revolution in the seventeenth century, capital accumulation helped the rise of capitalism, and in order to sustain the development of the Western European countries, colonialism became widespread on the global scale. From the seventeenth and eighteenth century, and into the nineteenth century, the African continent and countries in the East were turned into colonies of the European powers. Britain, France, the Netherlands, Spain, Portugal and other powers all have their colonies and concessions in the East! Great Britain in particular, having the most colonies in the world, was called "the empire on which the sun never sets" as its flag covered the western hemisphere and extended to the eastern hemisphere while the sun always shined on its flag.

As far as world affairs go, the general trend is that there is bound to be unification after prolonged division and vice versa. When the world powers could not agree on their "spoils", infighting and split ensued. Hegemony was transferred from the Netherlands to Britain in the eighteenth century, and then was taken from Britain by the U.S.A. at the turn of the twentieth century.

Since the Middle Ages when the Western European countries got rid of the feudal system and moved towards a capitalist and democratic era, astounding political and economic achievements were made, and unprecedented and splendid cultures and arts were created. These countries have led the world by navigating the global courses of politics, economy and culture, shaping the world for hundreds of years!

Democracy is good for the construction of social development, and it is also the carrier of humanity and humanism. However, when people live a leisurely and relaxed life, and are cared for in all aspects under a welfare

system, there would inevitably be work-shies, which would slow down national economy and saddle other workers and taxpayers with financial burdens!

For nearly a century, this situation has become obvious and caused a vicious cycle of economic development. At present, the European society, under the unstable international environment and political and economic situation, has formed complete social construction with saturated industry and business. Faced with the rise and global advance of the economies of the East, the development of the Western society has somehow been 'deprived' of the financial space. In addition, since the beginning of the century, there have been constant wars in the Middle East countries, which have driven millions of refugees into other countries, and led to serious tolls: social unrest as a result of loss of work and livelihood and religious conflict has inflicted heavy financial burdens on the European society already saddled with difficulties and problems, and made people's life worse off!

As the human race entered the twenty-first century, there were, and still are, examples of dictatorship and iron rule in Africa and the Middle East region. People are destitute, the gap between the rich and the poor is huge, the political system is rigid, human rights violations and corruptions persisted and the economic downturn led to a surge in unemployment. Poverty, from the deposition of deep resentment, became a drive of protest and revolution.

In December 2010, the Jasmine revolution broke out in the northern African country of Tunisia and forced Ben Ali out of the presidency and finished his rule with an iron fist of the "empire" for more than 20 years.

The Jasmine Revolution pioneered the regime transformation towards democracy in northern Africa and the Middle East, and thus the political storm caused reverberation in northern Africa and the "butterfly effect". The Egyptian regime for 30 years was overthrown and its president was ousted. A series of street demonstrations and protests were held in neighbouring Libya, Bahrain, Yemen and Algeria, which resulted in civil war and clashes between the police and the public.

As the Jasmine Revolution spread towards the Arab world, there came the "Arab Spring" protest movement, however since the Muslim countries have different backgrounds and traditions, coupled with vested interests within the countries and the backing of super powers, the democratic protest movement failed to achieve the desired effect to overthrow the autocratic semi-feudal regimes. On the other hand, ISIS, the extremist terrorist organization in Syria emerged in the troubled times, triggering the current global crisis of terrorism, while many countries in the Middle East have been plunged into a lasting war and turmoil!

The outbreak of the "Jasmine Revolution" and the "Arab Spring" quickly inspired the street protest and appeal in the Eastern countries. People in Japan and South Korea organized large-scale protests on the streets against the government. Although the Japanese public protest against Shinzo Abe did not achieve a direct result, his party lost seats "like waterfalls", which cast a shadow on his government and its revitalization. The power of the people in South Korea drove its first female president from her post. In recent years, large-scale public protests against governments took place frequently in Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and especially in Malaysia where protests were more heroic and the largest, although they have yet to produce substantial effect.

The democratic system has been run in the European and American countries for centuries, but when transferred to the Middle East and Africa, where, perhaps, historical backgrounds, traditional customs and cultures differ, it ultimately failed "to acclimatize". Even when the democratic system "was moved" to the Eastern world as Japan, Korea, and Taiwan took the lead in accepting and implementing it, it has been changed in practice, engrained with the native traditional cultural elements, and evolved into the Eastern-style democracy! The Southeast Asian countries also show their own geo-political needs and different cultural and ethnic backgrounds when implementing the democratic system with their varied characteristics – a variety of versions, shapes and colours. Although labelled as democratic system, the practice on the ground is far from that in the European countries and U.S. A.

It can be seen from the above that Europe should launch the second Renaissance in the hope of reinvigorating people and totally changing their perception! To learn from their European predecessors in the sixteenth century; to be resilient, self-motivated, to rekindle the spirit of the European people to change their fate!

Looking at China and India, the two Asian countries with ancient civilizations, their miraculous economic rise is not a coincidence! In the process of the human race, ups and downs are bound to happen, especially for a country with rich and in-depth cultural accumulation. Its poverty and backwardness are temporary, because it has the cultural vigour to drive and thrive.

It is particularly true in the case of China. Its socialist system has its own characteristics and is based on five thousand years of civilization, and this makes it not only dynamic, but more sustainable.

In 1911, Sun Yat-sen overthrew the Qing Dynasty, the last feudal dynasty in China. Since then, the country has experienced civil war for fourteen years and the war of resistance for eight years, whilst exploring political systems.

The Chinese people suffered as the country was weak for 100 years and chaotic for half a century until 1980s when Deng Xiaoping proposed "reform and opening up". In the short thirty years, China's social construction and economic development progressed from processing on order to now manufacturing its own brands. Technologies and products in light industry and home appliances, high-tech, electronic information and e-commerce have been exported to the world and are leading the way. As a result, most of the population is moderately well-off. In 2013, Xi Jinping put forward the "Belt and Road" initiative, the global economic cooperation strategy and a blue-print for shared development, which covers the political, economic, cultural, regional, racial spheres. It in a sense could be regarded as the "Eastern-style Renaissance"!

The "Belt and Road" initiative starts from the East, and it is our sincere wish to see the Eastern Renaissance sail smoothly through the Pacific Ocean and the Indian Ocean, and go around Asia, Europe, and Africa to revive the "Silk Road" and the "Maritime Silk Road" and to fulfill the wishes dating back to the ancient Han Dynasty for cultural and material exchanges!

### **III. Human Civilization and Politics, Economy and Culture**

"Looking upward, we contemplate with its help the signs in the heavens; looking down, we examine the lines of the earth." This is the interpretation of the Chinese people of its culture (civilization), which is recorded in the Book of Changes. From various changes in the nature we explore the mystery and changes in the universe, and deduce that human civilization is thus composed of men's labour and life in the society.

The definition by the Eastern world of human civilization, though narrow and limited, offers a simple and vivid description of the coexistence of the human race and civilization.

"Culture is the sum of material and spiritual wealth created by the human race in the process of social and historical practice." "Culture is a comprehensive entity of the spiritual and material civilization brought about by and embodied in the knowledge, faith, arts, ethics, law, and customs of the human race through work and labour in the process of its life!"

The interpretation by the Western world of human civilization is deeper, more detailed and accurate.

The interpretation and illustration of the human civilization in the East and West shows the inseparable connection between the human race and culture. Culture can be pictured as the blood in a human body, lubricating and stimulating the internal organs, so that the human being is capable of

thinking and has wisdom, thereby "internalizing" a spiritual civilization, and then "externalizing" to create a material civilization.

In order to survive and sustain its life, the human race produced material civilization through labour, but the material civilization is the drive of the spiritual civilization. It can be seen therefore that the spiritual civilization and the material civilization, as a combined force, play an essential role in the construction of society, the development of economy, the creation of culture and arts!

This is, perhaps, the "externalization" of the opposition between the spiritual civilization and the material civilization, as well as the "internalization" of the unity of the two.

Throughout the world history, we see the elite names that live in people's memory and leave a lasting impression on their minds, that never fade and forever release calling, are not, for the vast majority, those of the kings and emperors, lords and generals, the rich and the wealthy, but those of thinkers, philosophers, and artists ... whose academic works, ideological propositions, and works of art not only made selfless contributions to their times, society, and people in their lifetime, but also have a permanent place in history to motivate future generations. This is the great contribution of the human civilization to the times, society and mankind, and it is also the invisible driving force that propels the political, economic and cultural development of the human race.

Historically, thinkers and philosophers in the East and the West indirectly or directly influenced the policy making and implementation of the centralized governments or feudal rulers with their doctrines, ideas, opinions and strategies. This phenomenon evolved with time in the Chinese society.

After leaving the black forest of the barbaric and primitive ages, the human race entered the era of civilization, and went through the slavery, the centralized feudal era, semi-colonial and semi-feudal era, and finally arrived in the democratic and republic state. The evolution of the political systems, extending from Europe to the world, has also enlightened the socialist camp with various "special characteristics".

The European Renaissance in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries enabled people not only to get rid of the spiritual constraint of the rigid religion of the Middle Ages, but also to break the invisible shackles of the monarchy.

The industrial revolution and the accumulation of capital in the seventeenth century changed the productivity of the world and led to the capitalist and democratic system. At the same time, in order to maintain the development

of the capitalist system and the democratic political system, colonialism emerged in Asia and Africa. For more than three hundred years afterwards, Europe was the political, economic, and cultural centre of the world. Euro-centralism dominated the world.

When capitalism and the democratic system reached the peak in the nineteenth century, the great depression struck. Social turmoil, widespread pessimism and unemployment in Europe touched Karl Marx, who wrote "The Communist Manifesto" and the "Capital" in the British Library. He believed that a socialist political system should emerge at the peak of capitalism which would seek more equitable and reasonable living space for the society and the people.

In 1917, the first Soviet communist regime, which implemented the world's first socialist policy, was born. Since then, there has been a global "struggle of a century" between the capitalist democratic system and the socialist communist regime" until the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991. The global communism resulted in a "domino effect" as the communist countries changed their course, and the era of political struggle gave way to the global economic development and cooperation, when the countries sought "soft landing" for their political and economic system by moving "from economic reform to political reform".

Since the beginning of the twentieth century, the era of intense fight between the political systems and ideologies became a thing of the past. A socialist system with an economic development model and strategy with characteristics seem to be more effective and creative, and is welcomed by the international community.

The electronics, digital telecom, World Wide Web and high-tech caused disruptive and revolutionary changes to industry, economy, and business and trade in 1980s. The established economic development model of the European capitalist countries was under threat. As the capitalist economic strength, the "financial backer" of the democracy, declined, the support for the political system became 'powerless". In addition, constant warfare broke out in different regions, especially in the Middle East which, although good for the arms dealers in the capitalist countries, for the hegemonic aggression, and for the looting of resources, has caused lasting turmoil and displacement to the people and communities. Today, the wars in the Middle East not only cause casualties and displacement of tens of thousands of people, who escape to Europe and other countries over land and sea, which could be a time-bomb for Europe. At the same time, the constant and random attacks by the Islamic State make communities more unstable, causing widespread panic, and affecting economic development. Looking at the current international chaos and the status of the European society, it

seems that the combination of the democratic system and capitalism, which has been working for hundreds of years, cannot meet the needs of the current world, and it is time to rethink, to make changes or even to re-innovate.

The human race goes high-tech in the twenty-first century, exploring the mystery of the universe, and searching for miracles in the life of the black hole. "Cloning" technology has unlocked the mystery of life and has identified life duplication technology. The dynamics of electronic information has changed the global economic mechanism, impacted the international business structure, industry, trade and commerce, and the exploration of natural resources. The economic structure and development model have reached the watershed of revolution.

This is an era of heavy heartedness, and it is also an era for people to reflect upon breaking through time and space and captivity: in particular, this is the time when the human civilization should take the responsibility for the human race in the twenty-first century, simply because

Civilization is created in the human labour and life, and therefore civilization is duty-bound to serve the whole of mankind!

Economy is created by mankind in order to change living conditions and improve the production mode, and therefore it is our obligation to think innovatively and go forward with time to service mankind!

The aim of a political system is to better strengthen the country, its people and its security, to take the world into consideration, and therefore reform a political system in a timely and correct manner and making qualitative changes will benefit the world, and this is of great urgency!

Written on the island on 16 July 2017